

Angola pledge to 'liberate' Rhodesia and Namibia

Agostinho Neto, leader of the victorious Government in Angola, has declared his country would push on to liberate its like Rhodesia and Namibia (South Africa).

While a glimmer of hope for a Rhodesian settlement came when Mr Nkomo, the African National Congress leader, said talks were being adjourned to later "very interesting" new proposals.

Amin call to march on South Africa

Foreign Staff

Agostinho Neto of Angola has said that his people would not be deterred by the fact that Rhodesia and Namibia are now under British rule.

Angolan leader, in a speech in Brazzaville on Sunday, said: "We cannot limit ourselves to our own independence. We must fight for the freedom of all peoples."

Mr Neto said that his country would support the struggle for the liberation of Rhodesia and Namibia, and that it would be prepared to take action against South Africa.

He also said that his country would support the struggle for the liberation of all peoples, and that it would be prepared to take action against any country that oppressed its people.

Mr Neto's speech came at a time when the British Government is trying to bring about a settlement of the Rhodesian issue.

Disbury moves offer glimmer of hope

Foreign Staff

Disbury, a small town in the north of England, has been the scene of a series of moves which offer a glimmer of hope for a settlement of the Rhodesian issue.

The moves include the appointment of a new British ambassador to Rhodesia, and the appointment of a new British ambassador to South Africa.

These moves are seen as a sign that the British Government is trying to bring about a settlement of the Rhodesian issue.

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TUC accepts case for further pay restraint

By Paul Roush

The TUC has accepted the case for further pay restraint in the second stage of publication of its 1976 Economic Review today.

The Review says that the Government's policy of limiting pay increases to 5 per cent in 1976 and 4 per cent in 1977 is "very interesting".

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Mr Solzhenitsyn fears sudden fall of the West

By Roger Bartholomew

Mr Alexander Solzhenitsyn said in a BBC Panorama interview last night that he would not be surprised at the "sudden and imminent fall" of the West.

The exiled Russian writer, who was on his first visit to Britain since leaving Moscow two years ago, indicated that he had fears not just for the West but for his own life.

He said that the Moscow leadership have of course, particular feelings towards him, so his own destiny may be decided before that of his country, he said at the end of his interview in Russian with Michael Charlton, given in a country house in Northamptonshire.

"It is, of course, possible that they may try to get rid of me before the fate of my country changes for the better. I sometimes get news of that sort."

Such understatements were not frequent in what was inevitably a doom-laden interview. "The West is on the verge of a collapse created by its own hands," Mr Solzhenitsyn said.

"The Soviet Union's economy is on such a war footing that even if it were the unanimous opinion of all the members of the Politbureau not to start a war that would no longer be

in their power. To avoid that would require an agonizing change from a monstrous economy to a normal peace economy."

Two years ago the Soviet Union was in such difficulties that it had to seek some way out, and he and his fellow dissident, Dr Andrei Sakharov, the nuclear physicist, agreed that it should be the path of evolution. But since then, he said, "The West has given up not only four, five or six countries, the West has given up all its world positions. The West has given everything away so it can strengthen the tyranny in our country, that today all these

questions are no longer relevant in the Soviet Union. The speed of your capitulations has so rapidly overtaken the pace of our moral regeneration that at the moment the Soviet Union can only move along one path: the flourishing of totalitarianism."

The question was therefore not how the Soviet Union would find a way out of it, but how the West would be able to avoid the same fate.

Mr Solzhenitsyn brushed aside the idea, held by some of his critics, that he ignored the stark alternative to détente of a nuclear catastrophe.

In the face of the same threat in the early 1950s the West was like granite, he recalled. Now

it had made so many concessions that nuclear war was not even necessary to the Soviet Union. "You can be taken simply with bare hands. . . . The most important aspect of détente today is that there is no ideological détente."

As for the spirit of Helsinki, where the leaders of East and West Europe signed their agreement on security and cooperation last summer, how was it that so little news had come out of the Soviet Union in recent months about the persecution of dissidents, he asked.

He gave several horrifying recent examples of kidnappings and beatings by the KGB. The

Continued on page 2, col 4



The E14m Deep Sea Driller aground on the Norwegian coast yesterday.

Six die as oil rig is wrecked

Bergen, March 1.—Six men from a Norwegian oil rig which ran aground near Bergen in a hurricane force wind yesterday, were washed away and drowned when their lifeboat overturned several times in huge waves.

But 44 other oil workers from the Deep Sea Driller were saved when another lifeboat was launched before the rig began to sink.

The rig, owned by the Odfjell Company of Bergen, ran aground early today while being moved from its site in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea to Bergen for repairs.

Accompanied by a supply vessel, the Deep Sea Driller, which was being moved to Bergen for repairs, ran aground early today while being moved from its site in the Norwegian sector of the North Sea to Bergen for repairs.

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Frenchmen and a Briton. Many were in hospital being treated for shock.

The 19,000-ton Deep Sea Driller, valued at £14m, is believed to be a total loss. One of its support legs has broken off and parts of the drilling structure have been swept away.

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oil and natural gas industry in four months, and it brought total deaths to nine.

Three workers died and four were injured last November while they were abandoning the Alpha gas rig, operated by the Phillips group, after an explosion and fire.

Our Business News Staff writes: Deep Sea Driller was insured for £28m (£14m). A spokesman for Lloyd's said yesterday that about 70 per cent of that was placed in London and half of that, just under £5m, was with the marine underwriting syndicates of Lloyd's.

This is the latest in a series of expensive claims against the marine underwriting business. At the end of last year there was the loss of the tanker Berge Star which was insured for £10m (£5m), where about 70 per cent was placed in London.

Another tanker, Olympic Bravery, insured for £50m (£25m) of which 40 per cent is placed with Lloyd's, is at present aground off the French coast.

Yard men remanded on £5,000 bail

By Clive Borrell

Mr Kenneth Barracough, the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, yesterday ordered the passports of 12 Scotland Yard detectives, some of whom have now retired from the Metropolitan Police, to be seized.

The 12 men were charged with conspiracy to defraud the Metropolitan Police, and they were remanded on £5,000 bail.

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a former detective chief superintendent, of Epsom Road, Weybridge, Surrey; Leslie Frank Alton, aged 47, a former detective inspector, of Harefield Avenue, Chess, Surrey; and Bernard Peter Brown, aged 43, a former detective constable, now a politician of Coldharbour, Dorking, Surrey.

They were all charged with conspiring to receive money and other considerations from persons trading in pornography between 1960 and 1974.

A similar conspiracy charge relating to the period 1969 to 1974 was put to five other defendants: Det. Inspector Charles Edward O'Hanlon, aged 38, of Milner Drive, Sandy Lane, Cobham, Surrey; Det. Inspector Clive Alan Miles, aged 41, of Homefield Road, Rye, East Sussex; George Edward Fox, aged 45, a former detective chief inspector, of Arundel Avenue, East Ewell, Surrey;

Michael Leonard Chamberlain, aged 33, a former detective constable, of Victoria Gardens, Biggin Hill, Kent; and Det. Inspector David Cyril Jones, aged 41, of Sumner Gardens, Amersham, Middlesex.

Three other defendants were charged with conspiring between 1970 and 1972 to receive money and other considerations from James Humphreys, described by a judge at the Central Criminal Court as "the emperor of pornography," now sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for assault.

They were: Kenneth Ronald Drury, aged 55, a former commander, of Bexley Lane, Sidcup, Kent; Alistair David Ingram, aged 42, a former detective inspector, of Avenue, Hinchley Wood, Surrey; and Det. Inspector John Bryan Legge, aged 36, of Minster Drive, Croydon.

Prospects for world championship: Racing: Comedy of Errors in fine form for Cheltenham; Cricket: Yorkshire make profit of £3,000; Obituary, page 14; M Jean Martinon, Mr William Laty; Business News, pages 15-20; Stock markets: Worries about higher interest rates set equities and gilts back and the FT Index lost 2.4 to 40.8; Financial Editor: Commercial Union's horror story; GLC raises £10m; Unicorn's shrinking dividend cover; Lomax Business features: Christopher Wilkins describes how the use of computers and the need to centralise some key services could transform the traditional roles of the local bank branch; Patricia Tisdall on the careful monitoring that will take place of the Brent Cross regional shopping centre; Business diary: Lord Duncan-Sandys shrugs off the "unacceptable face of capitalism" label placed on Lomax by his former leader Mr Heath.

Home News: 2-4; Crossword: 24; Parliament: 7; TV & Radio: 23; European News: 13; Diary: 14; Premium Bonds: 14; Theatre, etc.: 23; Overseas News: 6; Engagements: 14; Sale Room: 14; 25 Years Ago: 14; Appointments: 9; Features: 8, 12; Science: 14; 7 Universities: 14; Arts: 15-20; Low Report: 8; Services: 14; Other: 2; Business: 15-20; Letters: 13; Show Report: 10; Wills: 14; Court: 14; Obituary: 14; Sport: 10, 11

Wave-power prototype 'in five years'

By Correspondent

A prototype of a generator for wave-power might be in operation in five years, according to a report by the Under-Secretary of Energy, disclosed after the department of 1 engineering yesterday.

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Equal pay appeal

A young married woman appeared before an industrial tribunal in Birmingham seeking equal pay with a male colleague who, she said, was getting £481 a year more than she was. She is being backed by the Transport and General Workers Union.

NEB guidelines

Draft guidelines for the National Enterprise Board published yesterday by the Department of Industry give it the same opportunities and obligations as private companies. But most of its actions will be subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for Industry.

NUJ sanctions

Barnsley branch of the National Union of Journalists has been given the union executive's support in its efforts to impose sanctions on four members who resigned to join the Institute of Journalists. They work for the "Barnsley Chronicle".

Code to end bribes

After admissions by more leading American companies of payments to individuals in order to win foreign business, codes of conduct have been promulgated to bring the bribery to an end.

£94m insurance loss

A £94m deficit on underwriting—£75m attributable to the United States—was the principal cause of the £10m loss reported by Commercial Union yesterday.

Concorde fare: The return fare on the Concorde service between London and New York has been set at £662, £114 more than the first-class submarine fare.

Brussels: At a meeting of EEC foreign ministers Mr Callaghan opposes European proposals for new fishing limits.

Manila: Police begin negotiations with the gang who kidnapped a British woman three days ago.

Europe: A look at MPs' pay.

1 injured London blast

A bomb exploded in Stanhope Road, Kensington, London, 7 o'clock last night. A man is injured and was taken to St. Mary's Hospital in the area. Police sealed off the area and said that they were looking for a suspect.

Uganda 'fence'

Uganda is selling its fence to the best-paying 'fence' group, until 108 of them are sold on Saturday night.

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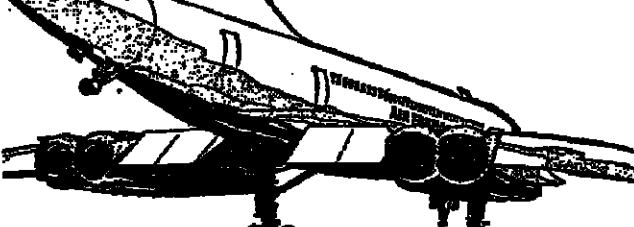
Uganda is selling its fence to the best-paying 'fence' group, until 108 of them are sold on Saturday night.

Air France Concorde to Brazil

Just about the only unsensational thing about Air France Concorde to Rio is the aircraft itself. On board, all you notice is the absolute tranquillity of supersonic flight. The quiet. The deep blue calm of the ionosphere. You arrive in Rio rested, relaxed, and ready for anything.

Air France Concorde to Rio flies every Wednesday and Sunday from the world's most advanced airport, Charles de Gaulle. And there's even a Rio/Sao Paulo through flight by B737 that's unique to Concorde. It operates on your Concorde flight number with fast, no paperwork transfers.

Air France Concorde to Brazil. You won't lose on the ground what you gain on the wing. Call Air France or your local Travel Agent for information.



AIR FRANCE
Concorde
158 New Bond Street, London W1. Reservations 01-699 9571.
Ticket Office and Passenger Sales Dept. 01-699 9611. U.K. Head Office
and Administration 01-699 4411. Manchester 061-654 7631/6

MPs may join Balliol and New College

Our Correspondent

Balliol College and New College are to be asked to open their doors to women. Andrew Whitehead, chairman of the Oxford University Students' Union, wants third-year undergraduates to apply for the two colleges as a test of the Sex Discrimination Act. Single-sex educational institutions are exempt from the Act, but Whitehead believes that does not apply to Balliol and New College. It is because when Brasenose, Hertford, Jesus, St John's and Wadham started women, being the first colleges to do so, Balliol and New College changed their statutes so that women could not be admitted, although under an agreement with the university they have admitted any woman. Mr Whitehead believes the two colleges are technically no longer single-sex, waiting to hear from the government whether it is willing to try to push the barriers of sexual discrimination.

William Hayter, Warden of New College, said the advice the college had given was that it was not to take women, even if it had changed the statutes.

Christopher Hill, Master of Balliol College, said the college had changed its statutes, undertaking that it would admit women as undergraduates or graduates.

Magistrate's ruling in little case

Committal proceedings do not take place against the accused of murdering a woman there might be a case in forming a bench in the case, Mr Stanley the chairman, said at a hearing in the Magistrates' Court, Staffordshire, today. Mr Barrington Black, for the Crown, said the accused, a 39-year-old, unemployed woman, had been charged with the murder of a woman, the Salop heiress, in a case involving three other women, and demanding £50,000. He was remanded in custody for a further week. Black said Mr Neilson, making his defence, said the case had been in the court for three months. "It appears to be an exceedingly long period for the case to be waiting for the trial to be served against," he said.

Mr J. Pemberton said he was with the Director of Public Prosecutions, but he had been heard.

Supertanker's first mooring buoy is a success

John Chatter, chairman of the 200,000-ton supertanker, the French tried to tie up to the world's first terminal single mooring buoy at Amble, yesterday, at her first trial. The tide was perfect and the first full-scale tests of the mooring project to pipe the tanker from Amble to the refinery 78 miles away were successful.

Miranda, the 540,000-ton tanker, only 200 miles from the coast, was in the incident. The vessel, about a third of the way along the mooring block of the ship, is by no means the tanker that will come to rough the pipeline in the future. The mooring is to be used to accommodate tankers to 500,000 tons deadweight.

Minister fails to solve deadlock

Transport Minister, Mr. Callaghan, failed to break a deadlock over Tyneside's new £200m rapid transit system, which was still under construction after a meeting called by the Minister for Transport, Mr. Callaghan, in London yesterday.

Mr. Callaghan, and Mr. Wilson, Minister of Transport, and Tyneside's Transport Executive met to discuss the system, but there was no sign of a shift in the deadlock.

Mr. Callaghan said it will not be until the next week that he will be able to operate it, thus going against an agreement reached last year. Tyneside's Transport Executive is operated by an international consortium of companies, including the British Rail, the Tyneside and Wear Council, and Tyneside's Transport Executive.

The consortium is to be operated by an international consortium of companies, including the British Rail, the Tyneside and Wear Council, and Tyneside's Transport Executive.

Quarantine back in force

Quarantine for 35 days was put in force yesterday in the Tyneside area. The Tyneside and Wear Council, and Tyneside's Transport Executive, are to protect poultry from diseases by captive birds.

In brief

AA subscription going up to £9

The Automobile Association is to increase its subscription by £1.50 to £9 from April 1 because of inflation. It was announced yesterday. That is double the 1971 fee.

The cost of the relay service is going up to £5 (from £3.50) and associate membership to £2 (£1). The enrolment fee remains at £2.50.

Minister attacks wedding 'sham'

The Rev James Miller, of Peterhead, writing in the Church of Scotland magazine, *Life and Work*, published today, suggests that church divorce courts should be set up as a means of ending hypocrisy over marriages.

Mr Miller says that the church ought to be the authority to divorce those who marry. If the state was to remain the only divorcing authority, it must be the only marrying authority.

Garden centre appeal

A £100,000 appeal was launched by the National Trust for Scotland yesterday to set up a garden centre at a 200-year-old mansion at Clackmannan, near Glasgow, given by Mr William Blyth.

Plea to police

A plea for police photographers at football matches to wear a uniform or to be distinguishable in some other way from press photographers was made yesterday by the Institute of Journalists.

Tougher rabies law call

The Animal Welfare Trust said in a letter to Home Secretary yesterday that there should be a prison sentence of at least three months without the option of a fine to keep rabies out of Britain.

Top of jail pops

Wakefield Prison folk group has again won the inter-prison musical competition held during 1975 under the Keesler Award Scheme. The £15 first prize went to Ethelred, who entered four original songs.

BBC faces libel suit

The National Coal Board issued a writ yesterday against the BBC claiming damages and an injunction against alleged libels in *Man Alive* on February 17.

Armed raid on garage

Four men, armed with a saw-off shotgun and revolver, escaped with £10,000 yesterday after a raid on Brian Gubby's Garage on the A30 at Camberley, Surrey.

Medallist promoted

Warrant Officer Ben Jones, who won a gold medal as an individual rider in the 1968 Olympics has been made a Lieutenant in the RAVC.

Or that your company is receiving maximum stock relief for corporation tax purposes?

Or that the land deal you're contemplating is legal?

Because of the ever increasing amount of complex legislation coming on to the statute books, what was once a fairly straightforward problem can now be extremely complicated. Whichever area of management concerns you, it is becoming more and more important to be aware of any change in legislation and how it affects you. Unfortunately, this requires a lot of the one thing people cannot afford nowadays.

Time!
But there is an answer. Oyez-IBC Ltd. now offers a series of audio cassettes for professional people in industry and

commerce. Many of the subjects covered will be of great interest to accountants, bankers, taxation specialists, export managers, property consultants and personnel managers, as well as to solicitors.

The cassettes, available under the name of "Cassette Law", have been produced in collaboration with The Law Society to ensure the highest standard of content. Each cassette costs £6.00 plus VAT and lasts for approximately 1 hour. Most subjects come in single cassette form, but where there is a need for two cassettes the cost is £12.00 plus VAT. As well as taking great care to engage the most qualified authority possible, "Cassette Law" audio cassettes are produced on high quality stereo cassettes so they can be played on any standard cassette

player including car stereo. Each course is accompanied by outline notes printed on the sleeve inside the cassette case.

Another advantage offered by "Cassette Law" is the use of modern audio-teaching techniques in scripting and production. For example, many subjects use the "question and answer" technique which makes even very complicated topics much easier to understand, and more important, easier to remember!

Although relatively new, "Cassette Law" has quickly become popular with many leading firms of solicitors. The authority and quality of production of the cassettes make them a highly effective method of continuing education at a very economical cost.

AC25 CAPITAL TRANSFER TAX AND TRUSTS

Outline and definitions. Settlements with an interest in possession—definition, charging provisions, exceptions and reliefs, tax mitigation. Settlements with no interest in possession—capital distributions, determination of rates applicable, special classes of settlements. Advantages and disadvantages of settlements in future.

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EST EUROPE

Britain resists fishing limits of only 12 miles round its coasts

Michael Hornsby

Callaghan, the Foreign Secretary, told his EEC colleagues today that recent Commission proposals for 12-mile national fishing limits within a Community of 200 miles were insufficient to meet the needs of the fishing industry.

Mr Callaghan pointed out that the 12-mile limit would provide 55 to 60 per cent of the combined EEC resources if 200-mile limits were declared.

He said that the Commission's proposal was not generally endorsed at the 12 Nations conference on the Law of the Sea beginning this month in New York. Mr Callaghan said that during the conference, which is expected to last for at least two months, it will be possible to work out a common position.

The foreign ministers also agreed to ask the European Commission to prepare a forecast of unemployment trends up to 1990 to serve as a basis for discussion at the next summit of EEC heads of government in Luxembourg on April 1 and 2.

Mr Callaghan said that Mr Wilson would be urging concerned EEC action to curb unemployment. Our Foreign Staff writes: The frigate Naïad (2,860 tons) arrived yesterday in the fishing grounds off Iceland to replace HMS Yarmouth, which was damaged in a collision with the Icelandic gunboat Baldur on Saturday.

HMS Yarmouth's bow was slightly holed and buckled above the water line, the Defence Ministry said in London.

member states, was "attractive" but he wondered how it could be effectively monitored and policed.

Dr Fitzgerald argued that quotas based purely on the average tonnage caught by member states in previous years would be unfair to a country like Ireland with extensive waters but a still undeveloped fishing industry. He also felt that quotas should relate to species of fish and not just to geographical areas.

The differences between the Nine on the future development of the common fisheries policy will make it impossible for the EEC to present a united front at the start of the Law of the Sea conference. The hope is that during the conference, which is expected to last for at least two months, it will be possible to work out a common position.

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The firm said that it normally imported 20 to 30 per cent of its stocks. We are in the Common Market and that means buying and supplying what the consumers want. All the big wine traders do as we do," one of the managers claimed.

Cake and TV 'no advance on bread and circuses'

From Our Correspondent Athens, March 1

Why is it that the working classes rarely go to museums, concerts, the theatre or ballet? What can the politicians do to bring this culture closer to the masses? These are some of the questions to be debated at a symposium on the future of the performing arts organized by the Council of Europe, which began in Athens today.

More than 100 parliamentarians and experts from Europe are attending the Athens meeting, which was opened by Dr Karl Czernetz, of Austria, president of the Council's Assembly. He said: "We must endeavour to make the arts accessible to all and yet recognize that each should be able to choose freely what form of art or other entertainment he supports."

The Roman plebs wanted bread and circuses. Cake and television today is no advance.

The general rapporteur today was to have been Mr Eugene Ionesco, the playwright, but he was unable to come. Mr Andrew Fauds, East of London, took his place, and told the meeting that as a performer, the symposium filled him with hope. As a politician, however, he was pessimistic.

"My constituents, by and large," he said, "do not give a damn about performance of the arts or that dread blanket word 'culture'. How can I explain to them that my visit to Athens was not a total waste of time? The reason for the symposium is to find an answer to this question."

The debates, he explained, would cover three main themes: The value of the performing arts; the popularization of the arts; or cultural democracy and a cultural policy for the performing arts.

The conclusion would be drawn up at the final sitting on Wednesday and would be debated in May by the Assembly in Strasbourg, which would work out specific recommendations for the European conference of ministers of culture to be held in Oslo in June.

Among the British delegates are Mr John Roper, Labour MP for Farnworth, Lord Beaumont of Whitley, Mr Richard Hoggart, who will present a report tomorrow on "fashionable conformity or cultural development". Mr Hugh Manning, president of the British Actors' Equity Association, and Mr Roy Shaw, secretary-general of the Arts Council.



Pasteboard figures of Chancellor Schmidt (left) and Herr Brandt, his predecessor, as buskers on a Dusseldorf carnival float.

Royal Opera and La Scala tell each other's fortune

From Our Correspondent Milan, March 1

La Scala, Milan, receives about twice as much in state subsidies as Covent Garden, the administrators of the two opera houses, Signor Paolo Grassi and Mr John Tooley disclosed as a press conference in Milan today. In the year ending this month, Covent Garden received £3.4m from the state, covering about 52 per cent of its costs. The rest has to be found out of the box office and private donations.

La Scala will receive about the equivalent of £6.5m if a Bill now being discussed in the Italian Senate is passed.

The press conference was held to introduce the Royal Opera House company that will be performing at La Scala for the next two weeks, while the La Scala company is in London at Covent Garden. The first performance here tomorrow night will be Benvenuto Cellini by Berlioz, conducted by Colin Davis with Nicolai Gedda, Elizabeth Harwood, Anne Howells in the main roles. Britten's Peter

Grimes and Mozart's La Clemenza di Tito will follow. The conductors will be, besides Mr Davis, Mr John Pritchard and Mr David Atherton.

At the press conference Mr Tooley and Mr Davis were welcomed by the chairman of the Society of the Friends of the Scala Gallery. "We have been spending three afternoons listening to the three operas you have brought here for we wanted to be in a position to judge your performance," he said.

It is the much-dreaded gallery that for two centuries has been the arbiter of the triumph or downfall of authors, singers and conductors at La Scala.

The Pope sees Dom Hume

Rome, March 1.—Dom Basil Hume, the newly-appointed Archbishop of Westminster, had a half-hour private audience with the Pope in the Vatican today. As is customary, no details of the meeting were released.

Police killing of clerk causes Valencia riot

From Our Correspondent Madrid, March 1

Police arrested nine workers in Valencia after hundreds of people demonstrated in protest against the fatal shooting of a worker by a policeman, it was learnt in Madrid today. Protesters interrupted the inauguration ceremony yesterday afternoon for the city's big spring festival, shouting for the resignation of the mayor and for amnesty for political prisoners. They also demanded home rule for the province of Valencia.

The worker, a clerk, was shot dead last Wednesday after an unauthorized strikers' assembly at Elda, near Alicante. Students, university lecturers and ordinary citizens have sent telegrams and letters to the Ministry of the Interior demanding an inquiry into the affair.

In Badalona, outside Barcelona, the scene of repeated demonstrations last month, authorities allowed Father Luis Maria Xirinachs, a Catalan priest and famous hunger striker, to head a pro-amnesty demonstration. Father Xirinachs, a candidate for this year's Nobel Peace Prize, took time off from his 12-hour daily vigil for amnesty outside Barcelona's Model prison to lead the march.

The six-week strike by miners in Asturias, in the north-west, showed signs today of coming to an end. An estimated 6,000 out of a total of 10,000 returned to work this morning; but in

other parts of Spain strikes involving more than 200,000 people continued.

The authorities said there was no danger at the moment of a shortage of food as a result of the strike by lorry drivers, which has spread to many provinces.

Señor Simon Sanchez Montero, a lawyer and communist leader, who recently was fined £7,460 and imprisoned, appealed today in a Madrid political court against his forthcoming trial. It is being condemned by opposition groups as a continuation of the methods used under General Franco.

Journalists in Seville were questioned by plainclothes political police after they attended a meeting at the weekend of the Socialist Alliance of Andalusia at the office of a lawyer.

The Government's plan to give Spaniards a limited right of assembly is in the hands of the Cortes (Parliament) this week. Under the terms of the proposal, organizers of demonstrations would have to ask permission 10 days before the event. For public meetings not involving street demonstrations, three days' notice would be required; and for the first time since General Franco came to power, no permission from the authorities would be necessary for meetings at private homes.

At the moment, it is still technically illegal for more than 20 people to meet without permission, even for a birthday.

Lisbon anger at farm takeovers

From Our Correspondent Lisbon, March 1

The Portuguese Government has warned rural workers against any further illegal occupation of farmlands. The warning comes after a state whipper boys for EEC member governments confronted with awkward economic policy decisions.

If the "long-suffering" Commission shared some of the blame for unpopular decisions, that might help governments to do "difficult things which they know are necessary and right", he suggested.

Mr Thomson, addressing a meeting of the European Movement in Brussels, said that Community discipline was essential if continuing economic problems, particularly long-term unemployment, were to be successfully overcome. "There may be advantage to member states facing economic weaknesses if they were to

Mr Thomson wants more EEC discipline

From Our Own Correspondent Brussels, March 1

Mr George Thomson, the European Commissioner for regional policy, today professed himself and his colleagues in Brussels as suitable whipping boys for EEC member governments confronted with awkward economic policy decisions.

If the "long-suffering" Commission shared some of the blame for unpopular decisions, that might help governments to do "difficult things which they know are necessary and right", he suggested.

Mr Thomson, addressing a meeting of the European Movement in Brussels, said that Community discipline was essential if continuing economic problems, particularly long-term unemployment, were to be successfully overcome. "There may be advantage to member states facing economic weaknesses if they were to

give up defensive national reactions to Community policies and stop saying that a special exception should be made to allow them to do things their own national way", he added, in a clear reference to recent British and French "go-it-alone" policies.

It could be a help to a government if it could say that it had no alternative course but to keep to the rules of a Community where the benefits are accompanied by obligations.

Calling for a Community strategy against new unemployment, Mr Thomson said that massive new investment was needed to make the Community less dependent on imported oil. It was also needed to bring about structural changes in Europe made necessary by the fact that the new countries were going to develop their own industrial base and do for themselves many of the processes at present providing jobs for European workers.

rowers smash vats and fill 1m litres of wine

Our Own Correspondent March 1

ter a relative lull, French growers from the Midi today mounted the highest protest against the imposition of cheaper Italian wines. Protest came just before EEC Ministers of Agriculture are due to meet in Brussels to consider, among other things, fresh proposals to curb France's excess wine production.

About 100 winegrowers, led by M. Pignatelli, this morning smashed open 80 wine vats after breaking into the cellars of the wine merchant of Ramel, at Meximieux, of Lyons. They also put

out of action a fleet of 30 wine tankers. About one million litres of wine is estimated to have gone down the drain. The growers maintain that the firm is one of the chief wine importers from Italy. Mme Colette Ramel said later: "It is not by coming and smashing up everything of ours that the growers of the Midi will resolve their problems."

The firm said that it normally imported 20 to 30 per cent of its stocks. We are in the Common Market and that means buying and supplying what the consumers want. All the big wine traders do as we do," one of the managers claimed.

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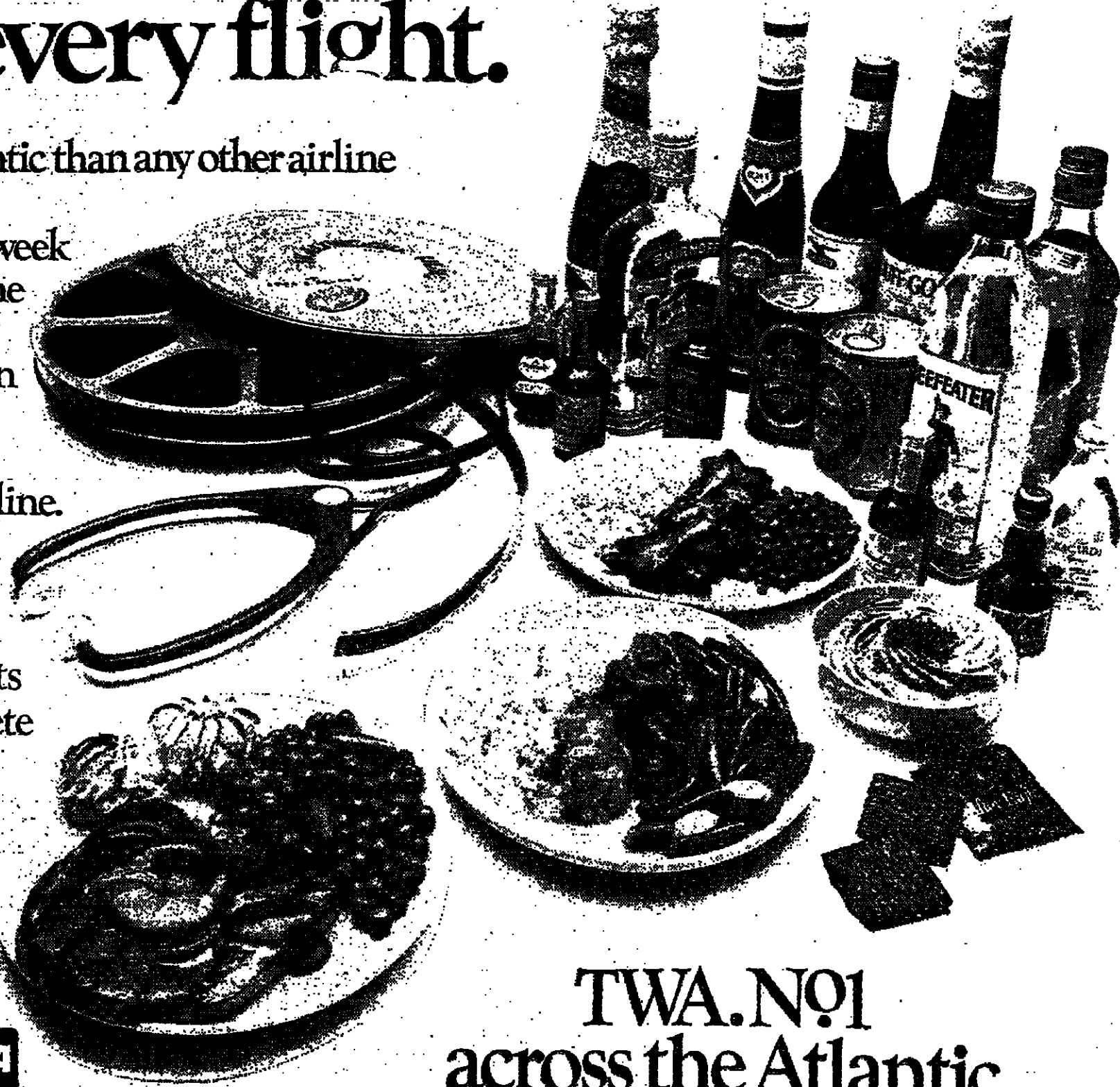
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THE CONCESSIONS OF THE WEAK ARE THE CONCESSIONS OF FEAR

Like political policy is in some ways like playing chess. There is both a strategy and a tactic, and the strategy ought to be coherent and consistent, and the tactics to be foresighted. In chess, the marks of quality are far ahead of the moves are seen. A grandmaster, by a combination of intuition and calculation, will sometimes see a move almost incredibly far ahead. A master will see three moves ahead, while the novice will look only to the next move and the other will not even correctly see the possibilities of that. In politics it is essential that policy should be formed by a man who does see the moves a long way ahead. Whatever other tactics may be levelled at the time Minister, he is never aware of possibilities. Even his narrow dictum that a week is long time in politics expresses a awareness of the multiplicity of future possibilities rather than lack of interest in the future.

ack of vision

It is just this quality which seems to be lacking, and to a dangerous degree, in the Shadow Cabinet. The initiative towards the trade unions not only shows at the Shadow Cabinet does not understand the trade unions, it also shows that the Shadow Cabinet does not understand politics. That is not because it is wrong the Conservatives to want to have better relations with the trade unions. Prudent Conservative courtship of the trade unions some form and at some time inevitable, but it is a courtship which ought to be conducted with finesse and with a sense of timing. The best way to woo a girl is not to plump down on her knees the first time you meet her, spilling a pint of beer over her front as you do so. The trade unions are a group of professional bargainers. A man reaches power in a trade union by being able to bargain, the same way as he reaches power in a bank by being able to handle money profitably. The bargainers will never deal with the trade unions successfully unless they recognize the bargaining relationship they are and bargain as calmly and rationally on their side as the trade unions will do in reply. What are the rules of bargaining? First of all you must establish a position of strength. If you

want to sell your house at the best price you do not say to a potential purchaser "I must have the money by next week because I am being pressed by my creditors". You say "I am under no particular pressure for money and I would rather keep this beautiful house than sell it for a bad price". The second rule of bargaining is that you time the making of concessions so that both sides feel that they have got more out of the other than the other really intended, and that they have had to work very hard for it. If you are trying to sell a house you do not open by saying "Of course I am asking £30,000 but I would be happy to take £20,000" if £20,000 is in fact the lowest price at which you are prepared to sell. At the present moment the Conservatives are not in a position of strength, and they will not be in a position of strength until they form a government. The right course at the present stage would therefore be to stay in the preliminary stages of bargaining. Of course the Conservatives should be very friendly towards the trade unions. They should lunch with them and dine with them and make speeches to them, if that is regarded as a kindness. They should praise their patriotism and their common sense and their rugged British virtues, but they should not try to do a deal from Opposition because the trade unions have no motive to conclude a deal with a Conservative Opposition.

Inevitable reply

It is not only that the trade unions are bargainers and will therefore react to any over-generous opening offer by asking for more. The trade unions do not want a Conservative government. A large number of trade unionists vote Conservative but hardly any trade union leaders do. Even the most right wing of them probably vote Labour and the great majority of them are sincere and active supporters of the Labour Party. There is therefore nothing now to negotiate, but there are bargaining concessions to be thrown away. The trade unions have replied to the Conservative approaches with a contemptuous rebuff. How did the Conservatives think that the trade unions would reply? Or did they even ask themselves what response they would receive? If on the other hand the Conservatives come back to power then the situation will be different. The trade unions will be dealing with a government in office, with all the power that government has, and at that stage serious discussion can begin. Even then the approach, while personally warm, should be professionally cool. You cannot afford to bargain with some of the most professional negotiators in the world on amateur terms. Yet this is only a part of the question. The great majority of Conservative voters correctly perceive that there is a direct conflict between their interests and those of the trade unions as at present constituted. Many trade unionists believe that their interests and the interests of their leaders are at variance, and that is one of the reasons that trade unionists vote Conservative. They do not want the Conserva-

tives to fight the unions, but they do want them to represent the interests of the non-union majority, particularly where those interests conflict with those of the trade unions. The closed shop is one obvious area of conflict. The electorate is intelligent enough to see that the appeasement of the trade unions by the Labour Government has produced some real advantages, it is possible that enough of them will feel that a Labour government can handle the unions best to keep the Labour Party in power. If the next election is fought on which party can be more friendly with the trade unions, or will have to pay the lower price for trade union friendship, then of course it must be won by Labour. It is only if the electorate wants a more detached and springy relationship with the unions that it will prefer the Conservatives on this issue.

National interest

This is in any case the right relationship for the Conservatives to seek. A government should neither fight nor appease the unions; it should represent the national interest and recognize that the trade unions are a part, but not the whole, of the national interest. Any good government will therefore sometimes be in conflict with particular trade union ambitions, for it is the job of the trade unions to represent their members and of the government to represent the whole nation.

By the end of the present Parliament there will probably have been thirteen or fourteen years in which Socialism in Britain will have been expanding. The Heath Administration did not reverse the trend. Already the case for a reaction away from British Socialism has become so strong that a Labour government is having to take—if inadequately—what are normally thought of as Conservative decisions about government expenditure, about the size of the bureaucracy, about the expansion of the social services. By 1978 the national appeal of the Conservative Party as a party of individualism, of reduction of government, and of reduction of taxation could be very strong. The Conservatives of course have to come to terms with trade union power. Yet the trade unions themselves have to come to terms with the failure of British Socialism to advance the real wages of trade unionists. The West German domestic product per head is now more than eighty per cent higher than ours; the EEC average is now more than forty per cent higher than ours. That failure cannot be separated from Britain's steady increase since November 1964 in state expenditure, in taxation, in state interference and in definite state mismanagement. Mrs Thatcher has attacked all these in her speeches, but if the Conservatives are to reverse the trend they will first have to convince the British public that they mean to do it, and that they have the power to do it. By their premature offers of unreciprocated concessions to the trade unions they have only succeeded in putting themselves on the defensive. As Burke said in 1775, "the concessions of the weak are the concessions of fear".

HUNDRED FLOWERS BLOOM IN MOSCOW

Nothing fairly remarkable is happening when a congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union finds itself opening to leaders of foreign communist parties saying in direct and indirect ways that they no longer regard Moscow as the fountainhead of dom on matters of ideology, tactics, human rights, or indeed anything much else. Of course, Moscow has learned to live with Khrushchev's independent foreign policy and Yugoslavia's ideological and political non-alignment, a good deal more adjustment than when Italian, French, British and other communist parties made declarations of independence in the citadel of at was once called the world communist movement. The Italian communists have been as far as to say that they are Italy remaining in existence in order to "defend sovereignty against foreign interference", which suggests that they regard the Soviet Union as a potential threat. They have indicated that they would carry out any more national-

ization of industry. The French have dropped the dictatorship of the proletariat from their doctrine, criticized the Soviet suppression of dissidents, and said that they want "socialism with the colours of France". Both say they would respect plural democracy, which means accepting defeat in free elections. Whether or not these new positions are tactical they create a new situation for east and west. They threaten the influence of both super powers. They increase the likelihood of communists participating in government in Italy and France, which would create problems in the western alliance. They also represent a further erosion of Moscow's doctrinal authority and in the long run a possible threat to Moscow's control over eastern Europe. If the Italians and the French as well as the Yugoslavs can establish their right to choose their own form of communism there is no ideological reason why the Czechs, the Poles, the East Germans and the rest should not do the same.

There have long been close contacts between Italian communists and Czechoslovak communists who participated in the reformist regime of 1968 which was crushed by Russian tanks. In every east European country there are nationally-minded communists who are highly critical of aspects of the Soviet system. National aspirations among communists have not been destroyed by the killing and persecuting of leaders who talked about national roads to socialism. Moscow's concern is indicated by its growing insistence on adding ideological uniformity to other forms of integration in eastern Europe, as well as by the passage in Mr Brezhnev's speech last week in which he said that in spite of the Soviet Union's world-wide interests "closest to our hearts and minds is that part of the world where the communist ideals... find their practical embodiment". The gradual drawing together of the countries of socialism is now very definitely being displayed as a logical process. That at least is the very opposite of the truth.

ottish independence

Mr Alexander B. Russell
Your letter from Sir Andrew (February 21) was written before the tremendous battle at Bannockburn, when the Scots, led by Robert Bruce, defeated the English army. It was a victory which inspired the Scots to another noble victory just the other day. Sir Andrew is right to say that the SNP would have had another 60,000 votes (including mine). As he says, "The key is the granting of an elected assembly to a people affected by a

natural and brilliantly exploited emotion". In the meantime, supported by a disgust with regional as well as Westminster government (however illigal), by hatred of unemployment, by the offence to our country of government book-burning, and by the desire to see a Scotland which would be a blessing, our varied banners march towards our new Assembly in the old High School. Why do Conservatives and Socialists join in the march? Do none of their leaders have the courage and the commonsense to save us from ourselves? For example, what sort of persons want to be politicians in our High School

Assembly? Will they be better, or worse, than our regional representatives? I agree with Sir Andrew Gilchrist about "the prospect of independence" and having to "plan our lives and our Scottish economy on that diminished basis". It will be pathetic to see a Scotland which is not reconciled to it. I still count on Scottish commonsense and realism, however loud I shout next year at Twickenham. Yours faithfully, ALEXANDER B. RUSSELL, Springwood Bank, Kelso, February 22.

Damages for air crash orphans

From Mr Norman D. Price
Sir, As an airline pilot I have a strong vested interest in the ramifications of aircraft accidents. I am not frightened of flying, but equally I am not oblivious to the negligence of others, my family will not suffer financially and those who caused my death should be made to ensure that this is so. No price can or should be put on a punitive character be made here—the criminal courts are the place for that. The fact that I may have been killed in company with a great many persons will not affect the losses suffered by the dependants of those who were killed. The wrongdoers, however, will suffer for their irresponsibility by the multiplicity of claims made against them, or, to be more exact, their insurance policies. Such claims will in turn be passed on to the general public who in the end always carry the cost. The recent awards made by a Californian Court to two children who lost their parents in the DC 10 crash in France startled me. £745,100 awarded to a mother and £745,100 awarded to a father, a 7 per cent interest will bring in a comfortable £52,000 a year between them for the rest of their lives; or spread out in cash payments over the period of their lives when they might reasonably be expected to be dependent would give them over £18,000 each to spend per year. It could be that this is in fact a measure of their financial loss; but could it also be that American lawyers desire the income from a percentage of damages awarded to their clients and push their claims accordingly? Wergeld, or blood-money, ceased to be a valid claim at about the time of the Norman Conquest. If this award is an indication of its return then we have more to fear from injustice than air-crashes. Yours truly, NORMAN D. PRICE, Orchard Lodge, Cranleigh Road, Egham, Surrey, February 28.

Golden handshakes

From Mr Walter Clegg, Conservative MP for North Fylde
Sir, Your correspondent Mr Philip Howard is to be congratulated on his witty and true article on the fashionable use of the word "obscene". It was a timely warning because its use has now spread to the episcopal. Unable to resist what must be the most widely used pejorative adjective of the decade, the episcopal voice has thundered it to describe not pornography but "golden handshakes". To describe as an obscenity the payment of heavily taxed compensation to businessmen who have been unfairly dismissed seems somewhat bizarre since Parliament has given a right of compensation to any worker who is unjustly sacked and this can run into thousands of pounds. It would be nice for laymen like myself to be told at what point the obscene begins. In these days of inflation perhaps the going rate could be announced weekly from the pulpit and perhaps each year in Crockford's Directory there could be published an obscenity table which would set out the going rates for salaries, wages, profits or dividends earned by people became obscene. In that way we could adjust our morals accordingly. Yours faithfully, WALTER CLEGG, House of Commons.

Policing offshore waters

From Captain Peter Dickens, RN (Retd)
Sir, Admiral Mackenzie's letter (February 25) was another good step forward in the defence of our maritime waters. The problem is in fact some-thing. The problem is in fact some-thing. Our narrow seas have always been vital to our security and economy and have often had to be defended. We usually do so only when triggered by a threat and then only in a couple of centuries ago it was practicable to bring in the main fleet to counter such a threat and we seem to think we still can, despite the two world wars when we were dismayed to find that forces deployed in the oceans were far too valuable to be risked amid the mined shallows, air threat, light craft and other hazards peculiar to narrow waters. So we were forced to specialize, only to dismantle the resulting organization (which was the only one able to be fully to comprehend is obnoxious to any peacetime Royal Naval establishment) at the earliest moment. Now hope dawns, because for the first time we have important activities and exercises in our narrow waters in peacetime which are actually visible and acknowledged to be under permanent potential threat. We have therefore no excuse for not creating a defence force which must be in addition to the existing navy and maritime air force as the admiral says. It must also be specialized for its task and who can tell what vehicles and equipment will evolve from real objective thinking? Judging from previous narrow seas experience units will tend to be small and peculiar; why not, for instance, a quickly deployable ship-borne submarine against abyssal skulduggery? When it comes to manning, maritime policemen are certainly needed to combat the individual law breaker. But we must also be prepared for international political pressures up to that level of escalation which can only be dealt with by the services; and they, if they are not there already, will probably not be properly equipped to help. Further, the navy would be foolish not to grasp the chance of rearing a breed of officer accustomed to command and acting in real life situations. Yours sincerely, PETER DICKENS, Lye Green Forge, Crowborough, Sussex, February 25.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

British policies in Ulster

From Mr Ian Gow, Conservative MP for Eastbourne
Sir, On February 19 you published a letter from nine Labour Members of Parliament who wrote that "the Government's policy in Northern Ireland is negative, evasive and fraught with further dangers ahead"; stated that "the Unionists have to be understood as being a minority in Ireland"; and called for "a clear declaration by the British Government that its aim is withdrawal from Ireland". The signatories of that letter believe that the policies which they advocate would have a better chance of bringing peace and happiness to Northern Ireland than those now being followed by the Government, with the broad support of the Opposition. I fear that that letter will have the opposite effect to the one desired. The border poll of March 8, 1973, and the election to the Constitutional Convention all showed that the Unionists were in a clear majority in Northern Ireland. In each of those democratic votes, the opponents of the Union were defeated by a clear majority. The Union, and did so. Their policy was rejected, and rejected decisively. A tiny minority, unwilling to accept this fourfold verdict of the ballot box, has resorted to the bullet and the bomb. It hopes that if the senseless slaughter and destruction go on long enough, the British Government and people will, eventually, tire of the struggle and withdraw. The letter from the nine Labour MPs will have encouraged that hope. Instead of giving a clear declaration that its aim is withdrawal, the British Government should repeat that so long as the majority of the people of Northern Ireland wish to stay within the Union the Union will be maintained, strong, clear, and undiminished; that the Queen's subjects in Northern Ireland are as much entitled to the protection of the police, and ultimately of the army, as are the people of Sussex or Lancashire; that the battle against terrorism, like the battle against other crimes, will be fought with an iron resolve and with total impartiality, however long and hard the road may be; and that those who advocate withdrawal ought not to be mistaken for the authentic voice of either government or people. On the false expectation of a weakening of the national will, terrorism will flourish. It will want when there are no longer grounds on which that expectation can be sustained. Yours faithfully, IAN GOW, House of Commons, February 29.

From Mr and Mrs Anthony Firth
Sir, The letter from Miss Joan Maynard and other MPs criticizing government policy in Ulster (February 19) has not provoked the response their well-intentioned proposals would seem to deserve. Perhaps you may permit us to comment. Not government policy, but Northern Ireland itself is "negative", and "fraught with further dangers". Of course the province is an anachronism, but it is a guaranteed anachronism; and one of those areas of the world where the past won't go away. None of your correspondents' just strictures on a largely autonomous Northern Ireland was not true 20 years or

undertake a rather unpleasant business. Dead animals have to be buried; and serviceable skins, as in the case of cows, buffaloes and goats, have to be removed from the carcass. This again is done by the people who are not financially or socially viable, and carry out these tasks which can give rise to infection. Dhobis, the people who have to launder dirty clothes, also tackle jobs which are essentially dirty. The Aryans, therefore, when they organized society in India, relegated people associated with such occupations to a lower caste, and those which people in better financial circumstances did not like to associate socially or otherwise. We still, whatever our status and whatever our economic circumstances, do not like to shake hands: we prefer to join our hands in a firm handshake. Bodily contact is still avoided as far as possible, without any implications of social inferiority as regards those who are greeted. We had modern sanitation and modern plumbing probably the old and aristocratic prejudices would die out. If a so-called untouchable has the means, the intellectual equipment and the clothes to go to a school or college, he would not be segregated by his caste. I may add that Western civilization has had its own untouchables. Greek democracy and medieval knightly both had their own slaves. And, in India, at least, there has been no lynching. Yours faithfully, SARDAR S. BAJPAI, 112 Clarence Gate Gardens, Glenworth Street, NW1, February 24.

India's untouchables

From Mr Sarda S. Bajpai
Sir, Your piece on the untouchables in India (Richard Harris, The Times, February 23) is almost typically one-sided, unfair and superficial. The problem of untouchables in contemporary conditions, for anyone who knows India, is more a matter of money than of hereditary or ascriptive social caste. Any caste system with social developments in India over the ages, provided he or she had devoted any thought to them, would know that social regimes are very largely a matter of communal and personal hygiene. We still do not drink or eat clean water in the morning without cleaning our teeth; we do not break fast without having a bath. A Hindu having one of the two principal meals of the day will have a wash, if not a bath, and a complete change of clothing. We said wash our bottoms every time we use the lavatory—all due to the climate of the country. At the dawn of history, when social classifications were laid down, it was based on the professional activities of each class. For mental tasks, the poorest were available for the chores which had to be performed. Again, because of financial considerations, there is no widespread underground sewage system in the country, except in sophisticated cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and to a lesser extent, places like Cawnpore and Lucknow. Over the day human excrement has to be disposed of. This can only be done by human agency, by men and women who are poor enough to

Cut price conveyancing

From Mr Graham C. M. Young
Sir, In your Correspondent's article on this subject, in your edition of January 16, 1976, was the remark that the operation of "drafting the instrument of transfer" is an operation which "normally takes a couple of minutes". I do not propose to take issue with any of the other points in your article but may I, as a practising solicitor, say that it is quite hopelessly wrong? If what the Correspondent is referring to is simply the operation of preparing the conveyance or transfer then, that itself, must and does take very much longer than a "couple of minutes". The document could take any one of several hundred permutations, many of which are found in precedent books but very often these require to be adapted to consider and select the appropriate words; have it typed; have it approved by solicitors for the vendor and, if it was in a draft form, then have it retyped and stamped upon the client

even 50 years ago; and could well be true 20 years from now, because the aspirations and imperatives of the majority of the population in any free vote situation preclude, alas, the honourable intentions of outside well-wishers. The "unforgotten" demands from so-called "loyalists" arise from their "forgive our using the word"—democratic power base. In the freest elections Northern Ireland has had (a relative criterion) they have always done well; indeed always done better. The "continued violence and repression" are engendered by two forces, neither of which will be placated or persuaded by the signatories to the letter. These are: the minority requirement for party and participation in an, ultimately, post-Irish context; the "loyalist" insistence on recognition of their right to call the tune, backed, as they are, by the overwhelming majority of Ulster voters. To "underwrite the perpetuation of the Northern Ireland state" cannot, by any criterion, be the "most dangerous of the options". It exists; it is supported by the majority of those entitled to vote. Bipartisanship at Westminster has been exercised by an awareness of the irreconcilable nature of the two most powerful views of Ireland's future. From the outside we may logically conclude that it should be one nation, and not be inconsistent with its perennial refusal to behave. Confident in our own historical good sense, we disregard the fact that it can be as sensible as we only at appalling human cost; and, possibly, not even then. But of course there can be no coercion, even if there could and should be, since your correspondents would withdraw the troops. In any case, public opinion in mainland United Kingdom, we suspect, give an emphatic answer to the question we have posed before in your columns. How far is the United Kingdom public prepared to allow British soldiers to risk themselves either to be the meat in a conciliatory sandwich or the only (and make no mistake, it is the only) force capable of imposing on the "loyalists" a just solution?

Your correspondents appear not to understand that for Northern Ireland an all-Ireland context is the most significant and intransigent obstacle. It is foolish to speak of the reconciliation of the Protestant minority in the whole of Ireland to "living in a non-sectarian state". They observe that this "calls for some changes in Southern Ireland". How true. There are no non-sectarian states in Ireland. Carried away on the restless tide of jargon, your correspondents fanatically advance a parallel. They do so, of course, in a wider historical perspective of paternalist and exploitive imperialism, as is proper. But there is this little difficulty: the majority of the Protestant and Catholic communities, in the teeth of the historical gale, actually want to perpetuate the situation, will vote UUUC, and will almost certainly take up arms against an alternative. Of course, by then we shall have accomplished a passing out of the role of the Army. No doubt, in addition, we shall "encourage the formation of all Irish (sic) institutions". A great comfort that will be to the murdered and dispossessed. Yours faithfully, GAY FIRTH, TONY FIRTH, 59 Frogmoor, Hampstead, NW3, February 26.

From Mr G. S. Browne
Sir, Like most gardeners and small-holders I have my cultivator and other machines overhauled each winter. Mine have just been returned with the invoice. I expected the costs of labour and materials to be high but they were not. I was surprised to see that VAT at 25 per cent had been added to both items. We are exhorted to grow more food and, nowadays, with outside help either absent or very expensive, it is essential to have reliable machines to enable us to do so. These machines are certainly not luxurious, why should they be treated as such for VAT? Yours faithfully, G. S. BROWNE, Russells, Betchworth.

VAT on garden machinery

From Mr G. S. Browne
Sir, The bicentennial celebrations of the United States of America have prompted renewed interest in the events of two hundred years ago in the hope that they will help present a more balanced picture of Egyptian efforts of political and economic reconstruction, rather than emphasize the negative aspects exclusively. Yours sincerely, M. S. BROWN, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street, W1.

The regimental piper

From Major G. B. Murray
Sir, The bicentennial celebrations of the United States of America have prompted renewed interest in the events of two hundred years ago in the hope that they will help present a more balanced picture of Egyptian efforts of political and economic reconstruction, rather than emphasize the negative aspects exclusively. Yours sincerely, M. S. BROWN, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, 26 South Street, W1.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the British Army was accustomed to marching as a formed body of men, and the value of the drummer to keep the step was recognized. The next development was the fifer, and military bands were soon part of the establishment of an infantry regiment. Between 1805 and 1815 regiments of the British Army marched endlessly across the Iberian Peninsula. But what tunes were the pipers playing? Was it Pibroch? Was it the Robert Burns, Alton Rutherford, Lady Nairn, and James Hogg? I hope that these questions may prompt anybody who has knowledge of an eye-witness account of what the pipers actually did in those days, to write to me. We are very interested to know what tunes they played, whether they played singly or together or in concert with the drummers. Yours faithfully, G. B. MURRAY, Second in Command, 1st Battalion, The Black Watch, Roman Barracks, Colchester, Essex.

Machine tool makers warn Leyland over foreign orders

By Clifford Webb

British machine tool manufacturers have warned Mr Derek Whitaker, managing director of Leyland Cars, that any attempt to make up for lost time with his postponed £45m to £60m a year investment programme for machine tools could open the door to foreign competitors.

Last December, Mr Whitaker put a standstill order on his government backed capital programme when he ran into serious short-term financial difficulties. The ban should be lifted early next month.

Mr George Trowbridge, president of the Machine Tool Trades Association and deputy managing director of Wickman, Coventry, said yesterday: "Leyland Cars has continued negotiations with the machine tool companies throughout the standstill period."

"We have told the company that as an industry we have been working very hard to build up export markets, so we do not want to place them in jeopardy by a sudden flow of Leyland orders resulting from an attempt to make up for lost time."

"There is a danger that such a move could let overseas competitors."

Mr Trowbridge said the machine tool industry would

like to see Leyland Cars reserve capacity now to permit manufacturers to organize their output for the next 18 months to two years.

There was also a strong case for an early decision on a phased programme of machine tool replacements.

Last June, the MITA was told that Leyland Cars planned to invest up to £50m annually for the next 10 years and that more than 80 per cent of this would go to British companies. Since then, very few orders have been placed.

There are already reports that Leyland Cars is actively negotiating to buy East German machine tools. These unconfirmed reports have so alarmed the unions that shop steward members of the new participation management committees have given warning that they will bitterly oppose any such move.

Leyland Cars is reported to be contemplating a deal to sell 5,000 engines a year to Warrburg, the East German car manufacturer. The existing Wartburg engine cannot meet expected EEC exhaust emission standards and the East Germans apparently want to replace it with Leyland's 1.3-litre unit as fitted to the Marina.

This has led to speculation in the industry of an engines for machine tools barrier

Distillers voice fresh fears on short-time

By Derek Harris

Government reaction to a plea by whisky distillers for help with a cash-flow crisis has raised new fears of more short-time working in Scotland. The industry, which employs about 20,000 people, has seen a considerable amount of short-time for the past year.

With production last year down 29 per cent, the distillers wanted the Government to relax regulations on the payment of duty by the industry. This is paid when whisky leaves a distillery and there is usually a two month gap before distillers can recoup their outlay through the trade.

Deferment of payment—a concession the brewery industry enjoys—would ease by £50m to £110m according to the time of year.

Mr Gavin Strang, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, while not rejecting the plea outright, has been unenthusiastic. He feels the industry is asking for a tax concession.

But the Government is taking action about another anxiety of the distillers—discriminatory taxes by foreign countries against whisky. Such discrimination by Italy is now, at the Government's prompting, being investigated by the European Commission.

Chemical industry's plans for ethylene likely to be delayed

By Peter Hill

Long-term planning decisions by Europe's chemical industry on investment in production capacity for ethylene are expected to be delayed for at least a further 12 months.

A detailed study published today suggested that unless prospects for ethylene consumption showed an unexpected degree of improvement in the next 12 months, full completion and commissioning of some new capacity was likely to be delayed.

Scrapping of obsolescent plant will be accelerated, with the result that the potential for ethylene production in Europe will be reduced to significantly lower figures for 1978 and 1979 than had been forecast a year ago.

This assessment, based on returns made by chemical industry associations throughout Europe and coordinated by the Conseil Européen des Fédérations de l'Industrie Chimique (CEFC), last autumn, has important implications for the United Kingdom.

There are at least two major projects for ethylene which have reached an advanced stage of planning, and the Government is anxious to stimulate investment in basic chemical production.

Next week will see publica-

tions of the medium-term assessment for the chemical industry undertaken by the industry's economic development committee.

Shell and Esso have been involved in studies on the need for higher ethylene output in the United Kingdom while the British Steel Corporation, together with the National Coal Board and Continental Oil, have been involved in detailed feasibility studies.

But according to the CEFC report, consumption of ethylene is expected to be considerably below the production capacity available for the next five years.

In 1977 and beyond, consumption is forecast to grow at an annual rate of about 8 per cent. Plans now feel that the forecasts they made last year for the period 1977-79 are too optimistic.

Dealing with new investment the study stated that there was not likely to be any cancellation of major projects already under construction, but new projects were expected to proceed at a lower rate than projected last year.

Last year effective capacity utilisation at ethylene plants in EEC countries covered by the CEFC study amounted to 61.5 per cent.

Small firms: need for careful analysis of neglected data

From Mr E. G. Wood

Sir, Having long advocated the virtues of small firms I was delighted to see your report (February 25) of the Department of Employment analysis confirming that the incidence of strikes is lower in small firms than in large units. I shall look forward to studying the details when my copy of the D of E monthly gazette arrives, late as usual from HMSO, six to eight weeks after publication. Meanwhile, may I put in a plea for some analysis of other data by size of company and/or unit.

For example, the Department of Employment publishes masses of figures on wages and hours of work analysed by occupation, age, sex, etc. There are no published figures by size of enterprise or establishment. We simply do not know whether employees in small firms and units are paid less than their counterparts in large organizations. Are they so peaceful because they're well paid, or are they underpaid but don't mind or just don't realize? There is some research evidence based on small samples of firms but it's time we had some official data.

Could we also have an

analysis of corporation tax by size of firm. Again, none of the many published figures cover this aspect. I suspect that small firms, widely accused of fiddling their taxes, are less adept than large companies at taking advantage of legitimate tax avoidance measures. The Bolton Report devoted a whole chapter to tax but based its recommendations on what the law said, not on what actually happens in practice. Can we please have some figures over several years showing corporation tax not just as a percentage of profit but as a proportion of added value and per employee? We also need similar figures for other taxes and rates.

Finally, can we have an analysis of Government grants by size of company (not just by size of grant, as at present). My theory is that small firms have been getting less than their fair share, despite massive publicity of the various schemes and the willingness of the civil servants to help small firms obtain grants. I suspect that things are better now than they were 10 years ago, but have yet to meet any small firm that has managed to get £2,000 per employee in Govern-

ment grants, as some (not just the lame and

For too long, the sector has relied, in for survival, on the those who can experience but few The first essential of a battle is good work. David slew G he died. Start out hard tried behind. The facts that could disprove the case firms are locked Whitehall, but not a right way. Let's be sorted out the right published for all to while, if on no other than improving induc tions, let's call a enlargement of organ both the private a sector before we p more trouble for our children and gra Yours faithfully, E. G. WOOD, Centre for Innovation Productivity, Sheffield Polytechnic, Rialds House, 16 Fitzalan Square, Sheffield S1 23Z, February 27.

National Coal Board signs £1.7m ICL deal

A significant order for International Computers was signed in London yesterday by Sir Derek Ezra, chairman of the National Coal Board, and Mr David Clement, NCB member for finance and chairman of the board's Computer Power subsidiary.

This is for an ICL 2970 computer, believed to be worth about £1.7m. Computer Power is one of the country's largest computer service bureaux, operating through six inter-linked centres in main industrial regions.

At present the NCB bureau uses both ICL and IBM computers. It provides a range of technical and commercial services both to the coal board itself and to about 800 outside organizations.

The large, new ICL computer will form part of the board's move to develop extensive database and communications facilities.

Local authority market

The main market for software services in local government lies in dedicated operational systems rather than standard financial applications, according to Mr Hugh Screen of the Local

Computer news

Authorities Management Services and Computer Committee. Addressing the Computing Services' Association in London last week, Mr Screen said that operational systems such as those for police, fire, and social services provided a market opportunity for both microcomputers and software systems.

There was also a big market for basic systems software, Mr Screen added, especially for IBM computers and possibly in future for ICL equipment also. Databases were becoming more important, as different departments of a local authority needed access to the same information.

Honeywell/Xerox

Honeywell Information Systems is taking on about 80 employees of Rank Xerox Data Systems in Britain in field services and software support. This follows agreements completed last weekend under which Honeywell has now assumed responsibility for the

maintenance and marketing services of the mainframe computer business formerly operated by Rank Xerox in the United Kingdom.

Xerox in the United States will continue to produce mainframe computers and peripherals to meet outstanding orders, and Rank Xerox will continue to fulfil existing customer commitments until the end of this year.

Honeywell will then take over all engineering support functions. Mr Steve Jerrits, United Kingdom managing director for Honeywell, said that the 40 Xerox computer installations to which Honeywell was now committed in the United Kingdom would "broaden the computer marketplace served by Honeywell by adding in particular large computer systems in the scientific applications area."

NRDC software

Three computer software packages developed at Nottingham University under contract to the National Research Development Corporation have been licensed for marketing by D. K. Wright & Associates, Nottingham.

The packages provide facilities for work study engineers and production engineers in industry. A new company, D. K. Wright (Computer Applications) has been formed to market the packages and provide other services; the managing director is Dr Norman A. Schofield, who previously led the design team at Nottingham University.

New SWIFT schedule

As a result of the software delays in developing the Burroughs central computer system for the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunications (SWIFT) network, revised "cutover" dates for the various countries have been published.

Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Germany and France will cutover on October 29; the United Kingdom on January 17, 1977; Switzerland, Italy, the United States, Canada and Norway on March 31; Denmark and Sweden, Finland and Austria on April 18.

Kenneth Owen

Showroom merger opposed

By Ronald Emley

Merging gas and electricity showrooms would not benefit the economy or the customer, Mrs Williams, Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection was told yesterday.

The Gas Consumers' Council and Electricity Consumers' Councils told her that the expense would be unwarranted, inconvenience would be prolonged and the merger would not greatly improve the flow of energy saving information. The report was taken full advantage of the unit prefixes—Greek upwards and Latin downwards—which were built into the original metric system and which remain in today's *Système International d'Unités* as a means of avoiding a plethora of dots and ciphers.

Long French usage offers two good examples. First, in French kitchens the decilitre is in constant use. The world's classic works on cookery (Escoffier, Pellaprat, Montagné, St Ange and others) make full use of it and so avoid indigestible masses of millilitres. Second, French wine growers use the centilitre. If Mr Mortimer, when next he receives a case of fine, chateau-bottled claret, will turn a bottle upside down, he will see the figure "75" embossed in the glass. Thank goodness it does not mean 75 millilitres, but 75 centilitres.

The SI has many faults, but its provision of prefixes for making convenient adjustments in its unit magnitudes is not one of them. Lord Orr-Ewing is right to condemn attempts to resurrect the use of these prefixes.

OLIVER STEWART, Osborne, Seaview, Isle of Wight, February 26.

From Mrs A. S. B. Oloer

Sir, Oh please, Mr Mortimer, my hips would be 940. OLGA OLVER, Wysswood, Welcomes Road, Kenley, Surrey CR2 5HE, March 1.

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Commercial Union Assurance Company Limited

The following are the 1975 United States results of the Company on the Statutory basis published there today:—

	1975	1974
Written Premiums	\$701.7m	\$634.2m
Earned Premiums	\$634.8m	\$622.1m
Claims Ratio (to Earned Premiums)	82.3%	72.2%
Expense Ratio (to Written Premiums)	31.6%	32.5%
Operating Ratio	113.9%	104.7%
Statutory Underwriting Loss	\$100.5m	\$ 32.7m
Investment Income	\$ 55.5m	\$ 46.6m
Net Surplus Assets	\$211.0m	\$216.3m
Ratio of Net Surplus Assets to Written Premiums	30.1%	34.1%

As shareholders are aware, our US underwriting losses became markedly worse from April 1975.

In 1973, which, like 1972, was a profitable underwriting year in the US, we foresaw some deterioration in underwriting results in 1974/75 and we also became concerned about the uncertain outlook for interest rates and corporate profits. Action was therefore taken in anticipation of both these developments.

On the investment side during 1973 and 1974 we reduced our holdings of common stocks and shortened our bond portfolio. As a result of these investment changes we have had a strong continuing margin of solvency, as shown by the ratio of net surplus assets to premium volume. The above ratios reflect our bond holdings valued on the (Statutory) amortized cost basis but these ratios are little changed if bonds are taken at their market values.

So far as underwriting was concerned, we considered how we could limit the effect on the Company of the deteriorating underwriting trend that we had foreseen. In addition to the normal and regular underwriting processes, we sought increases in General Liability rates by 50% from the latter part of 1974. We also applied additional constraints on a number of classes of business where the outlook appeared uncertain. In Automobile, many of the rate increases authorised by the State Insurance Commissioners in this period assumed that the lower levels of motoring that were experienced following the 1973 oil crisis would continue in 1975.

In the closing months of 1974 and the early ones of 1975 we expected that, although some deterioration in underwriting results would continue until around late 1975, the measures that we had already taken would be sufficient to limit the adverse effects of this on our own results. We were also expecting that during 1975 further and necessary rate increases would be sanctioned, there would be some improvement in the US economy and the effects of inflation on Third Party awards would tend to moderate.

The underwriting results of the first quarter of 1975 were better than we had expected, but much poorer results emerged from April 1975 onwards and it became progressively evident that several of our expectations were not going to be fulfilled in the time scale we had assumed. Motoring had increased to the pre fuel crisis levels, the improvement in the US economy was delayed and awards for damages continued to rise.

In order to make certain of reducing, as soon as possible, the scale of our underwriting losses, we decided in the latter half of 1975 to cancel a considerable number of United States agencies from most of which the business was unprofitable and on which we could not see any prospect of profit in 1976 and beyond. Contracts with some 20 per cent of our agency force have been cancelled and the business from them will cease

during 1976/77. These agents produced about \$130m of annualized premium income, or just under 20 per cent of our 1975 volume. We have not withdrawn from any State and have not totally discontinued writing any class of business.

During 1975 we also made extensive reductions in expenses, including staff, which are to some extent reflected in the reduced expense and commission ratio.

All the actions that we have taken in the United States in recent months have strengthened our position there and should improve the prospects of the business we write in the future.

The audited worldwide underwriting results will be published on the 6th April 1976, but, in view of the United States results and to avoid uncertainty to shareholders, the Directors have decided to issue the following preliminary unaudited statement:—

	1975	1974
Written Premiums	£m	£m
Underwriting Loss	923	766
Investment Income	(-194)	(-115)
Life Profits	6	3
Profit/Loss before Tax	(-110)	50
Profit/Loss after Tax	(-14)	29
Earnings per Share	(-1.16p)	12.26p

Written premiums increased in 1975 by approximately 20%, over half of which arose from changes in exchange rates.

There is included in the underwriting loss of £94m for 1975, a provision of £15m towards the cost of running off the cancelled United States business referred to above, which is not reflected in the United States results on the Statutory basis set out above. The United States underwriting results on a consolidated basis in the U.K. will show a loss of £75m. Changes in exchange rates since the end of 1974 have caused our worldwide loss before tax to deteriorate by approximately £7.5m.

1975 has been a very difficult year, and our underwriting results have been extremely bad, particularly in Australia and the United States. However, the action taken earlier in Australia and the United States was not stringent enough to avoid the worst of the difficulties experienced in both countries during 1975. That action has now been taken, and some improvement is already in evidence in Australia. We also expect to see some improvement in the United States in the course of 1976. Subject to economic and political conditions we are confident that in 1976 we can expect better worldwide underwriting results.

The Directors have decided to recommend the maintenance of the dividend for 1975 at the same net rate as that for 1974, the cost of which, amounting to £21.4m, will be charged against Reserves. After making this charge, the net surplus assets of the Group at the 31st December 1975 are expected to be £280m (£222m 1974).

The Annual General Meeting will be held on the 10th May, during which the first quarter's results for 1976 will be announced.

Insure with
Commercial Union
Assurance



Limits soon on wool suits from E Europe

Mr Peter Shore, Secretary of State for Trade, is expected within the next two weeks, to reveal details of measures hammered out with five East European countries, to limit their exports of low cost wool suits to the United Kingdom.

Government officials have been involved in talks with Romania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and East Germany for some months, attempting to negotiate voluntary agreements to cover the exports of wool suits to the United Kingdom.

Exports of suits in man-made fibre fabrics from the Far East to Britain are covered by quota controls.

Yesterday Mr Shore published a letter he has sent to the Leeds Chamber of Commerce which had called for selective import controls and anti-dumping measures to be taken against East European imports.

Mr Shore stated that he had not received any application for an investigation into alleged dumping of suits from any source and observed that some United Kingdom clothing manufacturers were also "significant importers" of East European suits.

He said that he had made it clear that the Government would not hesitate to use the full force of its anti-dumping powers where a cause could be supported.

Plea for curbs on imported gloves

The National Association of Glove Manufacturers is afraid that British production of industrial gloves will be killed off by government inaction on curbing cheap imports from the Far East.

In a recent letter to the Department of Industry, the association claimed that undercutting was so fierce that "imported gloves sold in this country account for approximately 82 per cent of the total".

The association wants the Government to implement a quota system similar to that operated in France and other EEC countries.

Rise in car hire purchase

A total of 90,964 motor vehicle hire purchase contracts were taken out in February, according to Hire Purchase Information. This compares with 84,183 in January and 87,729 in February last year.

The number of new cars bought on credit last month slipped to 18,793 from the January figure of 19,580, but was 300 more than a year earlier. Used car hire purchase deals were significantly higher at 51,526 in February against 45,669 in January and 49,499 a year ago.

Metrication's scope for meaningful prefixing

From Major O. Stewart

Sir, Mr John Mortimer, in his letter "Time to kill the centimetre" (February 25), makes an unjustifiable attack upon Lord Orr-Ewing's very sensible view that the centimetre is a convenient unit, more useful than the millimetre for many purposes.

Engineering industry workers may approve of multiples of 1,000, but most measures find the 1,000 jump too coarse. It provokes wasteful prolixity in writing and ugly clumsiness in speech. People who are familiar with metric measures take full advantage of the unit prefixes—Greek upwards and Latin downwards—which were built into the original metric system and which remain in today's *Système International d'Unités* as a means of avoiding a plethora of dots and ciphers.

Long French usage offers two good examples. First, in French kitchens the decilitre is in constant use. The world's classic works on cookery (Escoffier, Pellaprat, Montagné, St Ange and others) make full use of it and so avoid indigestible masses of millilitres. Second, French wine growers use the centilitre. If Mr Mortimer, when next he receives a case of fine, chateau-bottled claret, will turn a bottle upside down, he will see the figure "75" embossed in the glass. Thank goodness it does not mean 75 millilitres, but 75 centilitres.

The SI has many faults, but its provision of prefixes for making convenient adjustments in its unit magnitudes is not one of them. Lord Orr-Ewing is right to condemn attempts to resurrect the use of these prefixes.

OLIVER STEWART, Osborne, Seaview, Isle of Wight, February 26.

From Mrs A. S. B. Oloer

Sir, Oh please, Mr Mortimer, my hips would be 940. OLGA OLVER, Wysswood, Welcomes Road, Kenley, Surrey CR2 5HE, March 1.

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From Mrs A. S. B. O

EDITOR
careful
data

BY THE FINANCIAL EDITOR

Commercial Union's horror story



Mr. E. Pavitt, chairman of Commercial Union, waiting for General Mining's next move.

CU figures are horrifying. It will not be until well into 1976 that we shall know whether the very expensive clearing operation in the United States has really dealt with the fundamental problems.

Some \$100m of United States business has been excised, at a cost which CU has felt bound to provide against to the tune of £15m. Whether any of this provision will ultimately be owed back remains to be seen, though one has to say that if anything CU has erred on the side of under-provisioning elsewhere in the recent past.

Meanwhile, this £15m, together with the £10m that has been set aside to cover return premiums on workmen's compensation business, extreme provisions and other contingencies in the United States, largely explains why the 75 total underwriting loss in early 1976 was what it was.

doubt. The long-term holder need have little to fear, but I would not be surprised to see the underwriters left with stock and, possibly, a small discount developing in the price when dealings begin.

Unicorp That shrinking dividend cover

Having been fought over by General Mining and Gold Fields of South Africa, Unicorp Corporation now finds itself in something of a "Catch 22" situation. Facing up to living with the victor, Gen Min, and with the prospect of continuing the relationship with a full-blooded marriage in the not too distant future, Unicorp has fallen into the dividend trap.

Unicorp's bumper £100m dividend was a price of 96¢, the 12¢ per cent issue, dated 1983, yields 13.25 per cent on redemption, comparing favourably with the 12.66 per cent on Anglo's 10 per cent 1982's issue and the 11.45 per cent on the nearest gilt, Treasury 12 per cent 1983.

The problem is the sheer size of the offering. The GLC's thinking is that there is still plenty of institutional liquidity and that, since relatively few gilts have been sold to the public in the past three or four weeks, the time is as ripe as it will ever be for a blockbuster of this sort.

Were the issue no more than £30m or £40m it would be hard to argue with this line of argument, but £100m is another matter. There is now a much more widespread feeling in the market that the interest rate cycle could be close to the bottom, and that gilts have seen their best, so the climate is far from ideal.

Moreover, while the stock is initially only £10 "paid", the remainder is being called by May 5, which is early for such a big issue. It should not be forgotten either that marketability is much more restricted in stocks like this than in gilts. The price of the issue has been subsidised in the few days to deal freely in much more than £100,000.

All of this explains why it has been necessary to offer such attractive terms, and it may not need much of a dip in the gilt market in the next few days to leave the success of the issue in doubt.

The £20m Brent Cross shopping centre in North London opens to the public today with a fanfare of publicity which may obscure the interesting legal battle going on behind the scenes. The centre's developer, Hammons Property & Investment Trust and its partner, the Regal London Assurance, who share a 40 per cent interest in the 790,000 net sq ft development.

The litigation between Hammons and Regal is over the respective shares of the £20m or £30,000 (25 per cent of the entire, rent, rdl) and an initial attributable rent roll of around £2m that 60 per cent is worth £1.2m a year, and Regal Walker's share could be either £300,000 or £25 per cent of the entire, rent, rdl).

At present, Regal Walker's stake in the development is shown at a nominal £25. But, valuing the two possible interests on a 20 per cent basis, the group's share could be worth either £34m or £84m, against a capitalization of £3m. And if speculation about Hammons' desire to eventually buy out the minority interest proves correct, Regal Walker's immediate investment appeal could lie off the North Circular rather than with its diverse leisure activities.

Unicorp's dividend was at least twice covered. But in 1973, it declined to just under 2 times covered, then to 1.6 and now—with a maintained dividend on a 10 per cent drop in attributable profits—it has fallen to 1.4.

At the height of the bid battle in 1974, Unicorp raised the dividend from 24 cents to 42 cents and now finds itself in a bind. Gen Min, which with associates holds 29.9 per cent of Unicorp, needs all the cash it can get, partly because of the loans it is still up in buying into Unicorp. So if the dividend is lowered, Gen Min feels the pinch.

It may have been all very well for Unicorp to have argued during the bid that a reduction in cover was permissible because of the high cover of its investments, but now it is in danger of finding itself without the resources to undertake major new developments.

One way out of that might be to offer shareholders a stake in them but that brings us back to Gen Min's cash problems. The cause of the profits decline last year are not hard to find. Although gold had its problems, it was still a unique shopping experience. It is certainly the largest of its type, with 790,000 sq ft of gross selling space on a 40-acre site.

It is also Britain's only large-scale shopping centre to qualify for the planners' definition of "regional". The others are in the London area, and are part of four regional shopping centres planned in the early 1960s and the only one to get beyond the public inquiry stage.

However, the idea of a large covered shopping area occupied by a variety of shops is no longer unique. In fact, it is so common that it was in 1964, when Hammons applied for outline planning consent for Brent Cross. There are now nearly 50 developments in Britain, similar except in scale or location, either open or on the brink of opening, and costing anything from £4m to more than £30m.

The progress of shopping centres in Britain has been slower and different from that in Europe or America. Planning control is more rigorous here (although these have been tightened up in other European countries) and planners are less enthusiastic both about the future of motor car dominated shopping and about the risk of despoiling areas from established town centres.

As a result there has been more emphasis on city centre renewal developments, such as the Bull Ring in Birmingham. There are signs, however, that government attitudes are softening towards out-of-town shopping projects, and for food retailers in particular, because of the lower prices which can be offered.

The nearest equivalent in terms of size to the Victoria Centre in Nottingham, developed by Capital & Counties with Nottingham Corporation, where the 780,000 sq ft of retail area was opened in a single phase in 1972.

Thereafter the film moves on to Vienna in June for showing at a congress organized by the Bureau Internationale de Producteurs d'Assurance de Reassurance.

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help to determine the future of insurance in the United Kingdom. Brokers on film

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Computerization and the pressure to centralize some services could transform traditional roles

Upheavals looming in the bank branches

Trade union alarm over the Midland Bank's recent confirmation that it plans to close 40 branches in the immediate future has emphasized how little it takes to reopen this particular wound in the banking world.

The bank concentration of the sixties was inevitably followed by a reduction in the branch networks and, while it has generally been handled with tact and skill, banks have made no secret of their desire to trim further. National Westminster, for instance, has closed between 500 and 600 branches in the past six years and feels that its present 3,400-strong network is still 400 to 500 too big.

But for all the constant pressure to prune wherever possible, there is no sign that any bank is embarking upon a fundamental new assessment of branch presence. In the Midland case the present closures represent nothing more than a cleaning-up operation—activated by new top management and falling profits—after three or four years of relative inaction.

The decision whether or not to close a branch is not dependent simply upon profitability, in any case. Any bank with pretensions at national coverage cannot afford to ignore the needs of its local branches. There is a limit on the extent to which customer loyalty can be transferred from one branch to another by mail and most banks would be prepared to carry a certain number of loss-makers.

More significant are the efforts the banks are devoting both to cutting branch costs and to improving the services which, in some cases, are no longer felt to be best dealt with in the traditional manner. It is these efforts, rather than

piecemeal closure efforts, which are likely to transform the nature of branch banking in the years to come.

Most immediately apparent to the customer is the onset of computerization, purely in the form of machinery into which plastic cards can be fed to produce cash or a range of information about an individual account, and partly in the form of equipment to produce "on office" savings.

On such developments are still in an early stage. On the first, Lloyds is perhaps the most advanced with customer terminals in about a quarter of its branches.

As for the latter, the banks are at varying stages of development, but now all use computer facilities to hold records centrally, to give branches an instant source of information and to provide a cheque-clearing service.

In due course it seems probable that the practice of self-contained branch bookkeeping, with double checking of entries, will be completely superseded by single entry via electronic checking.

How far, in an expanding market, computerization can result in a meaningful reduction of workforces, and hence salary bills, is questionable. But, at the very least, growth in staff should be checked.

Certainly the pressure to cut staff is great. NatWest reckons that the overheads predominantly in the form of salaries, are the most effective cost to the bank of taking in "free" current account money is 6 to 7 per cent, compared with more like 4 per cent for savings or four years ago.

Equally important for many branches, however, is the tendency towards greater centralization of operations. In the minds of senior managements it is clear that centralization equates, at least in part, with greater efficiency.

Because of the growing complexity of industry's demand for finance there has been increasing pressure for the banks to form specialist departments and to this extent it tends to be handled at regional or head office level rather than in the branches.

Such has long been the case with foreign business and most banks now operate "pool" systems to cover specialist areas like insurance and leasing. When a customer wants the use of facilities of this kind his manager can call in an expert from a central pool to advise.

Much more controversial are the efforts which are now gathering momentum in some clearing banks to follow the same pattern in respect of corporate business. There seems to be a general reluctance to adopt wholeheartedly the American concept of nominating account executives to take complete responsibility for the affairs of individual companies, but central moves are being made in this direction.

The banks are well aware how unpopular such policies could be with managers who tend to regard corporate business as the most challenging and interesting part of their jobs. To push forward too quickly could prove disastrous for morale.

So developments could be on a modest scale to start with. Deryk Weyer, Barclays' senior general manager, said last year for instance that the bank did not yet see it as right to set up a full corporate division, although at least one other clearing bank is believed to be on the point of doing so.

Mr Weyer's argument was that very large customers still preferred to use their local relationships, but he conceded that the banks needed to get nearer to their customers' problems and that modern corporate treasurers needed to deal with bankers who could understand and organize their business to fit in with their plans. Implicit in this line of argument is a questioning of whether these needs can be satisfactorily met by the average branch manager.

Most big companies already have some dealings with area or regional offices. But Barclays seems to feel that existing channels do not meet the needs described by Mr Weyer. It has therefore launched a group coordinator scheme, which involves the appointment, for each of a large number of company customers, of one man at senior level to act as general coordinator and contact. The aim is to link the centre with the grassroots to obtain the best of both worlds.

For the moment, therefore, Barclays is holding back from a full-scale commitment to a separate corporate financing operation, although logic suggests that it will in due course move further down this road.

Approaches will inevitably differ from bank to bank. The most direct is to transfer all corporate business above a certain value to a separate division, probably located in regional and head offices. Individual bankers within this division might then be given responsibility for number of separate accounts, while fairly routine matters involving money transmission and so on might continue to be run through local branches.

One approach is the possible loss of local contact and increased complication in communication. An alternative route actively being investigated by one bank in an effort to meet this problem is to install a corporate manager alongside the existing manager in branches with a certain amount of corporate business on their books.

However the matter is tackled, personnel difficulties look inescapable. Corporate lending would undoubtedly become a prestige activity within the banks, requiring special training and channelling off much of the bright young talent. The branch manager's job, by contrast, would assume a lesser standing than it has enjoyed hitherto.

Computerization can be expected to cut down much of the manual work formerly handled at branch level, so that the residual responsibilities could be reduced mainly to the handling of personal business and some smaller or fairly routine corporate business, plus the running of somewhat reduced back offices.

The banks will be anxious not to have their managers in arms at the prospect of such radical change, and in some quarters at least it is felt that developments will have to be paced to avoid disruption. In some cases, that might mean holding back change until retirement or other moves create vacancies and hence opportunities to introduce new systems.

But if banks decide that there is now some urgency and that, in practical terms, it is not desirable to centralize gradually, branch systems could now face some major internal upheavals.

Christopher Wilkins
Banking Correspondent

Monitoring the Brent Cross experiment

Brent Cross shopping centre, which opens in North-west London today, is heralded by the developers, the Hammons Property & Investment Trust, as a "magnet" for the Victoria Centre, the Victoria Centre's "magnet" for the Victoria Centre.

It is also Britain's only large-scale shopping centre to qualify for the planners' definition of "regional". The others are in the London area, and are part of four regional shopping centres planned in the early 1960s and the only one to get beyond the public inquiry stage.

However, the idea of a large covered shopping area occupied by a variety of shops is no longer unique. In fact, it is so common that it was in 1964, when Hammons applied for outline planning consent for Brent Cross. There are now nearly 50 developments in Britain, similar except in scale or location, either open or on the brink of opening, and costing anything from £4m to more than £30m.

The progress of shopping centres in Britain has been slower and different from that in Europe or America. Planning control is more rigorous here (although these have been tightened up in other European countries) and planners are less enthusiastic both about the future of motor car dominated shopping and about the risk of despoiling areas from established town centres.

As a result there has been more emphasis on city centre renewal developments, such as the Bull Ring in Birmingham. There are signs, however, that government attitudes are softening towards out-of-town shopping projects, and for food retailers in particular, because of the lower prices which can be offered.

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Built right in the city centre and using Jessops, part of the John Lewis group and the town's leading department store, as a "magnet", the Victoria Centre was intended to counteract the pull of suburban developments near by. Given the intervention of the recession it has been, by all accounts, reasonably successful. Certainly it tempted several retailers, such as Habitat and Ravel, into clearing centres for the first time.

Brent Cross has two department stores, a new type of fashion shop belonging to the Bond Street firm of Fenwick's, and a branch of the John Lewis Partnership, together with other shops, such as Marks & Spencer, W. H. Smith & Son and Boots.

It also has the covered mall and air conditioning which give the retailer designers new scope—for example, in abolishing shop fronts. With so many shared facilities, it is important that such shopping complexes are maintained as units and that retailers participate in maintenance and promotion costs.

Partnership between the retailers and the developers is also important in seeing that the right mix of tenants is maintained. Ideally, this is done by adjustment of rental scales so that a "magnet" retailer, such as a supermarket, pays a lower rent than a smaller shop, say, a haberdashery.

Ideally, again, from the developer's viewpoint, this is achieved by a rental based on a percentage of the retailer's turnover. This is common practice in America where a supermarket can pay, for instance, 1.38 per cent of sales per sq ft in rent against a millinery tenant who might pay, say, 10.1 per cent.

Rents based on turnover are much less widely used in Britain. At the Victoria Centre, for example, a handful of retailers pay their rents on this basis. At Brent Cross 10 traders out of the 80 total pay a rent based on a percentage of turnover, with a minimum which Sydney

LARGEST COVERED SHOPPING CENTRES

	Gross retail area (sq ft)	Developer	Opening date
Brent Cross, North London	790,000	Hammons Property & Investment Trust with Borough of Barnet	March 1976
Luton, Arndale Centre	785,000	Town & City Properties and Luton Council	Phases 1 & 2 opened in 1972
Nottingham Victoria Centre	780,000	Capital & Counties and Nottingham Corporation	Opened 1972
Newcastle, Eldon Square	600,000	Capital & Counties and Newcastle Corporation	Phase 1 to open in 1976
Runcom	580,000	Grosvenor Estate Commercial Developments and Runcom Dev Corporation	Opened 1971

Mason, Hammons's chairman, says is "significantly below commercial rents".

In most cases, the local council, as with those covering Brent Cross and the Victoria Centre, have a share in the development and take a proportion of the rent income. Once the developer has cleared an agreed return, typically between 9 and 10 per cent, the remainder is shared with the local authority either in a fifty-fifty or a sixty-fifty proportion.

Partly because large shopping centres, whether regional or city centre, are still untried in Britain, developers have a fairly long wait for profits. Capital & Counties estimated that it will not be until 1978 when rents are first reviewed that the company will make money from its initial rent levels, they say, are

probably only one third of what they should be.

Hammons, which spent between £20m and £25m on developing Brent Cross, will also have a long wait for its return. Mr Mason is looking beyond the next rent review in 1981 at the earliest to take rents (however they are allocated) up to £10 to £15 per sq ft.

Retail tenants, who through the Brent Cross Merchants Association are collectively responsible for the running of the centre, which is estimated at £500,000 in the first year, have also to recover individual shop fittings and normal trading costs.

They, too, are not optimistic about a quick return on their investment in the present economic climate. On a basis of

a return of £60 per sq ft it is estimated that the centre will need to bring in more than £47m a year to succeed financially.

There is concern about whether the 3,500 parking spaces allowed at the centre will be adequate to yield this amount and the tenants are already asking for more, because more than 70 per cent of customers are expected to come by car.

Above all, it is not known how much of a draw the centre will be and how much money customers will spend there. Peter Fenwick, chairman of the tenants' association, says "ask me again in three months' time". Again, if the centre is successful, it is not known how much of a drain it will be on neighbouring trading areas or what its effect on traffic flow will be.

These are questions which government and local authority planners are studying closely. This is why the Greater London Council, together with the Department of the Environment, is carrying out a "before and after" survey of shopping habits of 2,000 people living within 10 minutes' journey of Brent Cross. The factors studied will include traffic impact, parking, changes in shopping habits and the effect on local trade.

The GLC will also be looking at the longer-term effect which Brent Cross will have on the rentable values of nearby shopping centres, including those in boroughs which will not benefit from the rentable value of the centre itself.

Patricia Tisdall

Business Diary: Midland's Shelbourne • D of T's Harper

land Bank director Philip bourne could face some harassment at the shareholders' meeting on April 7.

last week the Church Commissioners, thought to hold at 750,000 Midland Bank shares, issued a statement ordering the Midland's directors to the Government's direction, whose system of the "End Loans" is clearly riddled with abuse by rich people generally.

though, as is their normal practice, the Commissioners are sponsoring the Resolution of the "End Loans" to South Africa movement at the AGM, they are also considering the possibility of preventing the directors from taking their present policy, say that they will vote not inconsiderable hold in favour, if there is no factory response on the part of the bank.

has added to the affair, the fact that the Midland board years ago when Midland over his unquoted Drayton up for £20m, has been a ch Commissioner for the eight years. Moreover, he member of its Assets Committee, which handles investment policy.

at year this involved study of House of Commons Select Committee report, "Wages and Conditions of African Workers" by British firms in Africa, as well as a recommendation of the Commission's 1972 decision to eschew investment in companies operating in South Africa.

bourne was in Paris today, but a spokesman for Commissioners said that there were no formal rules disallowing members because

of the policies pursued by organizations for which they work. It was, as the spokesman put it, a matter for Mr Shelbourne's own conscience.

Ernest Harper, could hardly have taken over from Christopher Taylor as head of the Department of Trade's insolvency service at a busy time. A total of 1,385 winding-up orders made by the courts in 1974, the most recorded in any year since the Companies (Winding-up) Act 1890.

Harper told Business Diary yesterday that when the 1975 figures for company failures become available this autumn they will be "much higher" than this previous record.

He is 54, has been Taylor's deputy for five years and is officially entitled "Inspector General of Companies, Companies Liquidation and Bankruptcy and Registrar of Deeds of Appointment".

Although the D of T's companies investigation branch is behind the reports on individual companies, Harper's insolvency service does kick off investigations that result in departmental or even police inquiries.

Civil proceedings brought by the D of T through the insolvency service and concluded in 1974 resulted in the recovery of £800,000 for companies in whose names proceedings had been taken.

It would be surprising if this total were not higher in 1975 for as the investigation department reported in 1974, the present trend is towards an increasing number of complaints of substance.

Flu, flu, fishing, flu, sulking, flu.

Brokers on film

If insurance brokers as a body are under attack in Britain, over the need for generalized professional standards and over commission structures, they are probably even less understood in Continental Europe. So a campaign is about to be launched to make them better understood and better loved.

The campaign is being launched by an organization which rejoices in the rather odd title of UKIBEC or the United Kingdom Insurance Brokers European Committee. Its chairman, Mr Francis Perkins, is also chairman of the Hogg Robinson insurance broking group.

A UKIBEC film with the rather fancy title of *The UKIBEC Connection* will be previewed before invited audiences in London this week before moving on to Brussels where it will be screened partly for the benefit of European Commission officials. Their actions will

strange contrast to the informal shareholders' forum-cum-press conference which developed at the end, with all and sundry invading the rostrum and questioning any director who was prepared to give them the time of day—as most were.

Roland "Tiny" Rowland, the managing director and chief executive, was supported by Khalil Osman Mahmoud, who is managing director of Gulf International, the Kuwaiti ruling family's company with a 21.5 per cent stake in Lounro, was in ebullient mood.

Khalil is much given to banter: the wife of a good boss, he said, is an unhappy woman, while a happy wife is bad for business. A middle-aged woman in the throng said: "It isn't like that over here, is it?"

While there is speculation about an Arab bid for Lounro, Khalil would only say that a 1p movement in Lounro's share price was worth £455,000 to Kuwait, and that investors should go into companies where there were large shareholders, because they were the ones who really cared.

He told the formal meeting: "We have not come to your country to take a negative solution, to destroy your civilization."

Lord Duncan-Sandys drew years of applause when, with a dig at former leader Edward Heath, he said: "Having regard to the fact that we make quite a useful contribution to United Kingdom taxation, and to balance of payments, it should not be assumed that they (the Treasury and Bank of England) necessarily regard the face of Lounro as wholly unacceptable."


"...opportunities for growth which are opening up for the Group are even greater than were anticipated..."

Highlights from the Statement by the Chairman, Mr I. H. F. Findlay.

- Revenue shows a growth of 29.6% but with continuing inflation a substantial increase in expenses was inevitable.
- We have concentrated on expanding our business in those areas where we have seen opportunities for our specialised skills.
- Any improvement in inflation and the state of world trade can only further enhance our prospects which, even in the current economic climate, I consider to be good.

	1975 \$000's	1974 \$000's
Revenue	36,515	28,173
Profit before tax	10,384	8,575
Profit after tax	4,845	4,278
Earnings per share	14.1p	12.9p

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